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081143Z Dec 04

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 006818

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/08/2014

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SUBJECT: TURKISH FORUM FOR THE FUTURE ATTENDANCE

(U) Classified by Political Counselor John Kunstadter, E.O. 12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (U) MFA Planning Department Head Tezel confirmed on December 8 that FM Gul will not attend the December 11 Forum for the Future meeting in Rabat. State Minister Besir Atalay will attend in Gul's stead. Atalay's portfolio includes the State Statistics Institute, Press and Publications Directorate, the Turkish Cooperation and Development Institute, the Social Assistance and Solidarity Fund, Turkey's official radio, television and news agencies, and Turkey's Radio and Television Council.

2. (U) Economy Minister Babacan will also attend. Tezel told us that the GOM also invited Finance Minister Unakitan, but he will not attend.

3. (C) Comment: Like his close political ally Gul, Atalay projects careful reasonableness with Western interlocutors but comes from the hard-core, Arab-oriented Islamist strain in AKP which has shown great suspicion toward BMENAI. While Gul is certainly caught up in last-minute Turkish lobbying for an EU summit decision Dec. 17 to open accession negotiations with Turkey, the decision to send Atalay reflects continuing GOT diffidence toward the initiative. End comment.
EDELMAN